Gill's Latches (Cellar Hole No. 1), Plane No. 14, and Farnum's Latches (Cellar Hole No. 2) on the D&H Gravity Railroad between Honesdale and Prompton:

The loaded and light tracks on the Delaware and Hudson Canal Company's Gravity Railroad between Honesdale and Prompton crossed three times:

1. In the Seelyville Pond area, via Gill's Latches
2. In the middle of Plane No. 14
3. At Prompton, via Farnum's Latches

Self-acting switches, or latches: In speaking of the planes on the 1829 configuration of the Gravity Railroad, John Torrey, in 1892, said: "The inclined planes were constructed with a *single track,* but with turnouts, and a short 100 to 150 ft. of *double track* in the middle of each plane, to permit the cars moving in one direction to pass those moving in the opposite direction. These turnouts were provided with self-acting switches, or latches, so that whenever a car passed *out* of a turnout in either direction, the switch was left in the right position to turn the next cars moving in the opposite direction into the side of the turnout thus vacated." (quoted by Manville B. Wakefield in *Coal Boats to Tidewater,* p. 14; Wakefield tells us that he is quoting John Torrey from Gerald M. Best's article, "The Gravity Railroad of the Delaware and Hudson Canal Company," that was published in Bulletin #82 of the Railway and Locomotive Historical Society, April 1851)

1. In the Seelyville Pond area, via Gill's Latches

Gill's Latches (and Cellar Hole No. 1) were located on Level 13, a short distance to the west of Seelyville Pond. At Gill's Latches, Level No. 13 on the light track between Honesdale and the foot of Plane No. 14 in the Bear Swamp Road area crossed the loaded track from Waymart to Honesdale, the one above the other.

In the accident report given below about the accidental death of John Coffin in October 1868, Gill's Brook is mentioned:

Fatal accident near "Gill's brook, "a short distance above Seelyville , in October 1868:

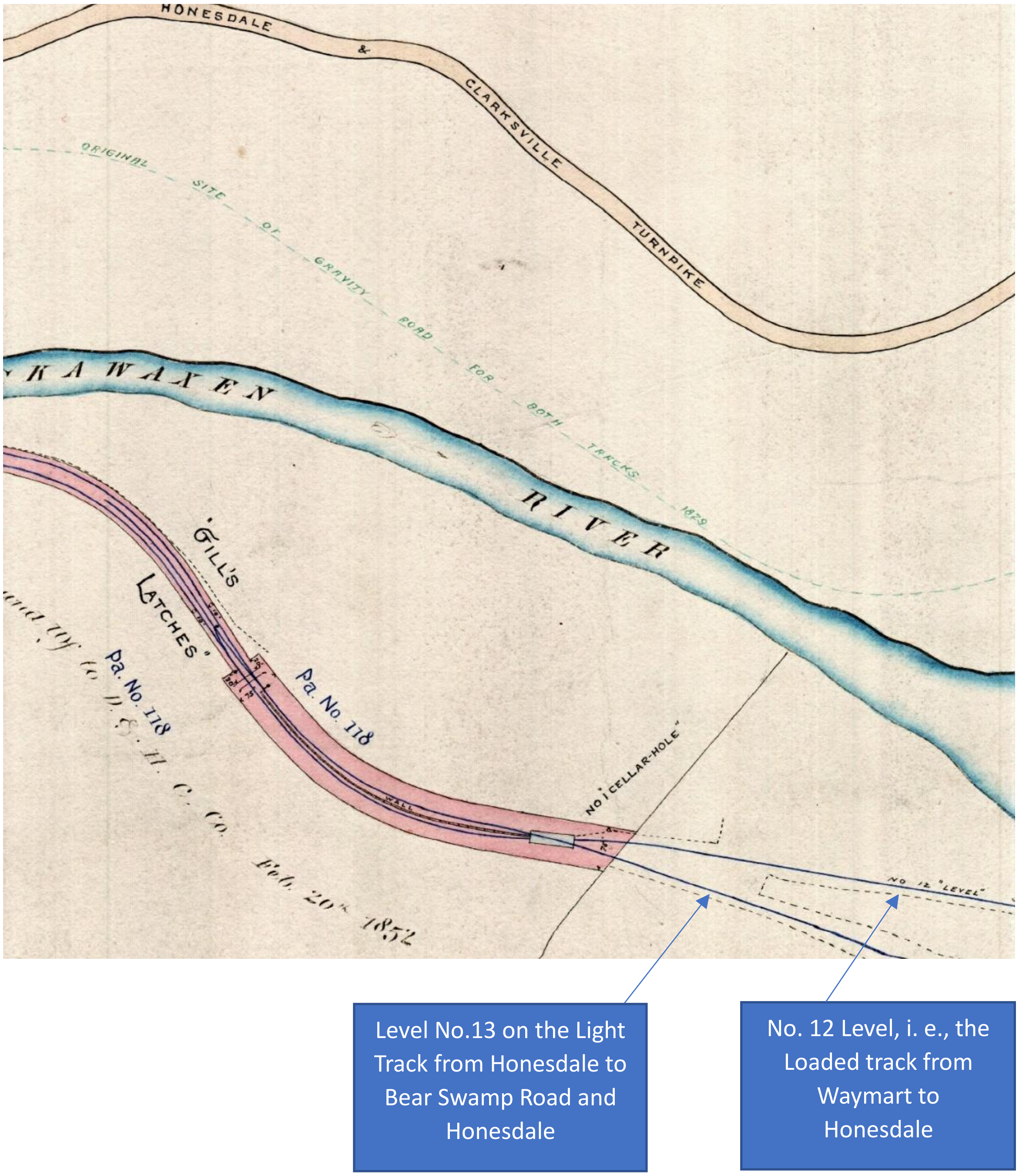
"FATAL ACCIDENT. – On Saturday night last Mr. John Coffin, an old resident of this vicinity, having spent the day in town [Honesdale] started for his home at No. 2 [the second plane out of Honesdale, i.e., No. 14] via the Del. & Hud. R. R. Not reaching home that night, his family became alarmed as to his safety, and search being made, his lifeless body was found, lying in the road at a point where it passes under the railroad track* <u>near Gill's brook, a short distance above Seelyville.</u> Mr. Coffin had evidently missed his footing at the point and falling several feet upon the stones beneath, had broken his neck. His body was still warm when found. The deceased leaves a family.—*Wayne Co. Herald." (Carbondale Advance,* October 10, 1868, p. 3)

* John Coffin was apparently walking on the D&H tracks from Honesdale to Seelyville and fell from the track at Gill's Latches into the Cellar Hole beneath the track.

The light and loaded tracks at Seelyville Pond: Loaded track (Level No. 12) north of light track (Level No. 13); loaded cars to move to the right (Honesdale), light cars to move to the left (Bear Swamp Road and Honesdale). Gill's Latches were a short distance West (to the left) of the site shown here.

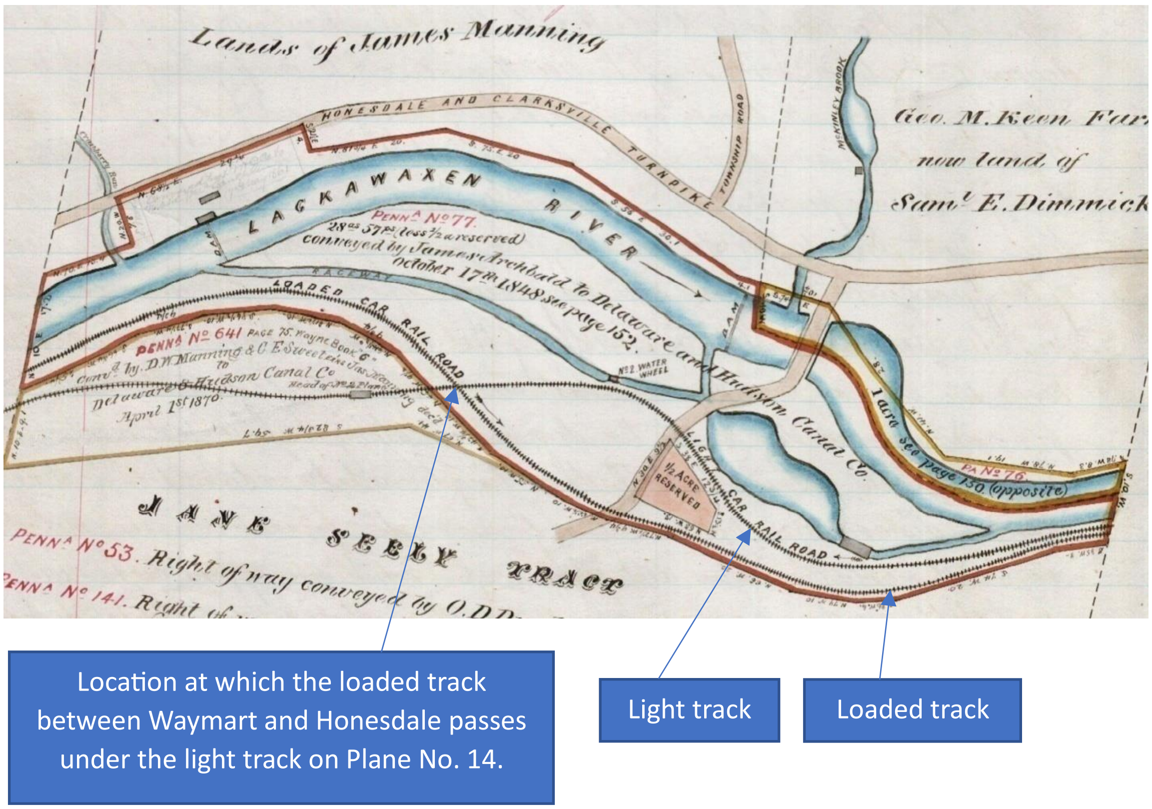


Here is a map view of Gill's Latches and No 1 Cellar Hole: This site is a short distance West of Seelyville Pond:



2. In the middle of Plane No. 14

The loaded track between Waymart and Honesdale passed under the middle of Plane No. 14 on the light track, a short distance west of Bear Swamp Road. The cars could not be switched between these two tracks here.



3. At Prompton, via Farnum's Latches

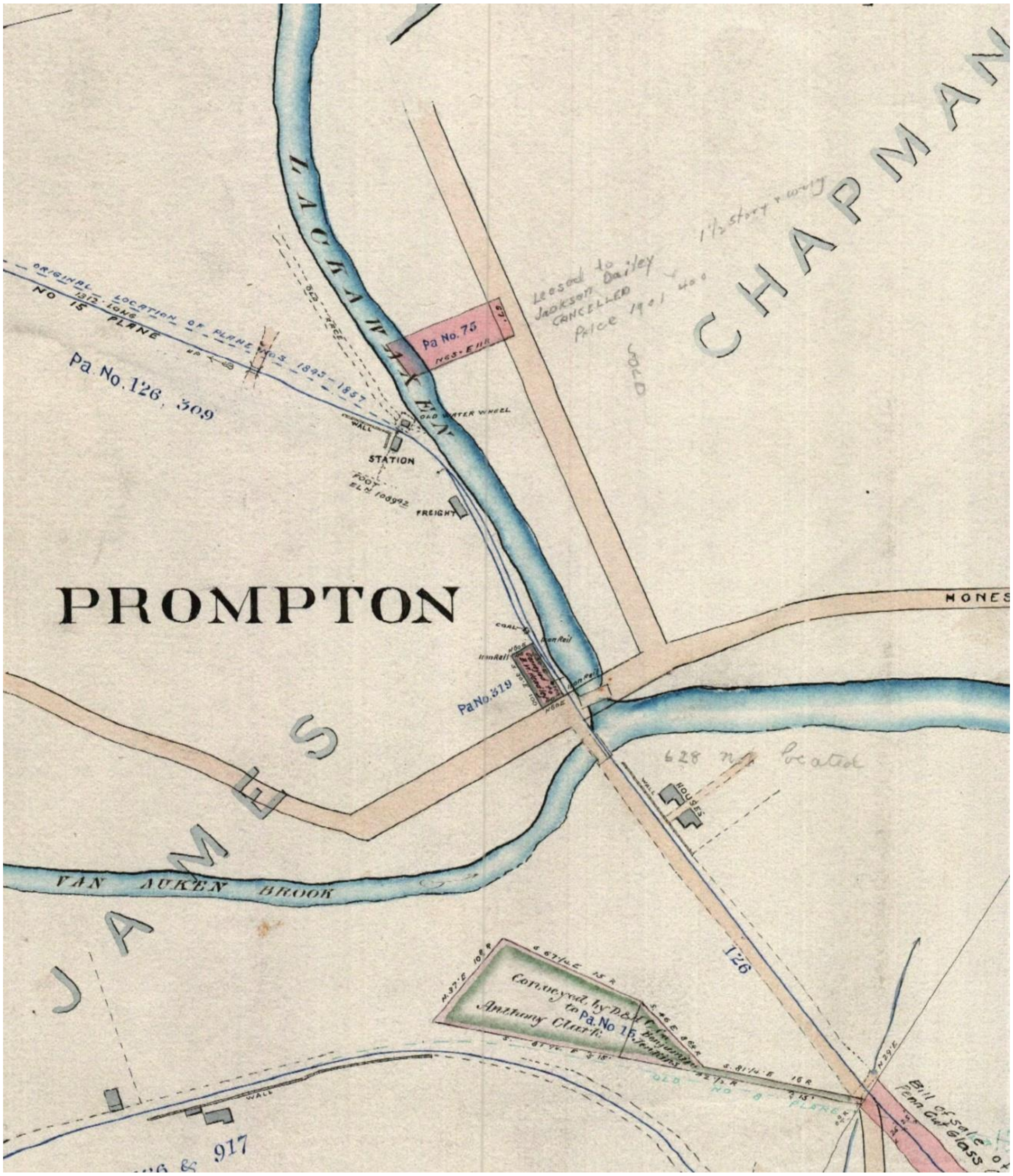
Farnum's Latches (and Cellar Hole No. 2):

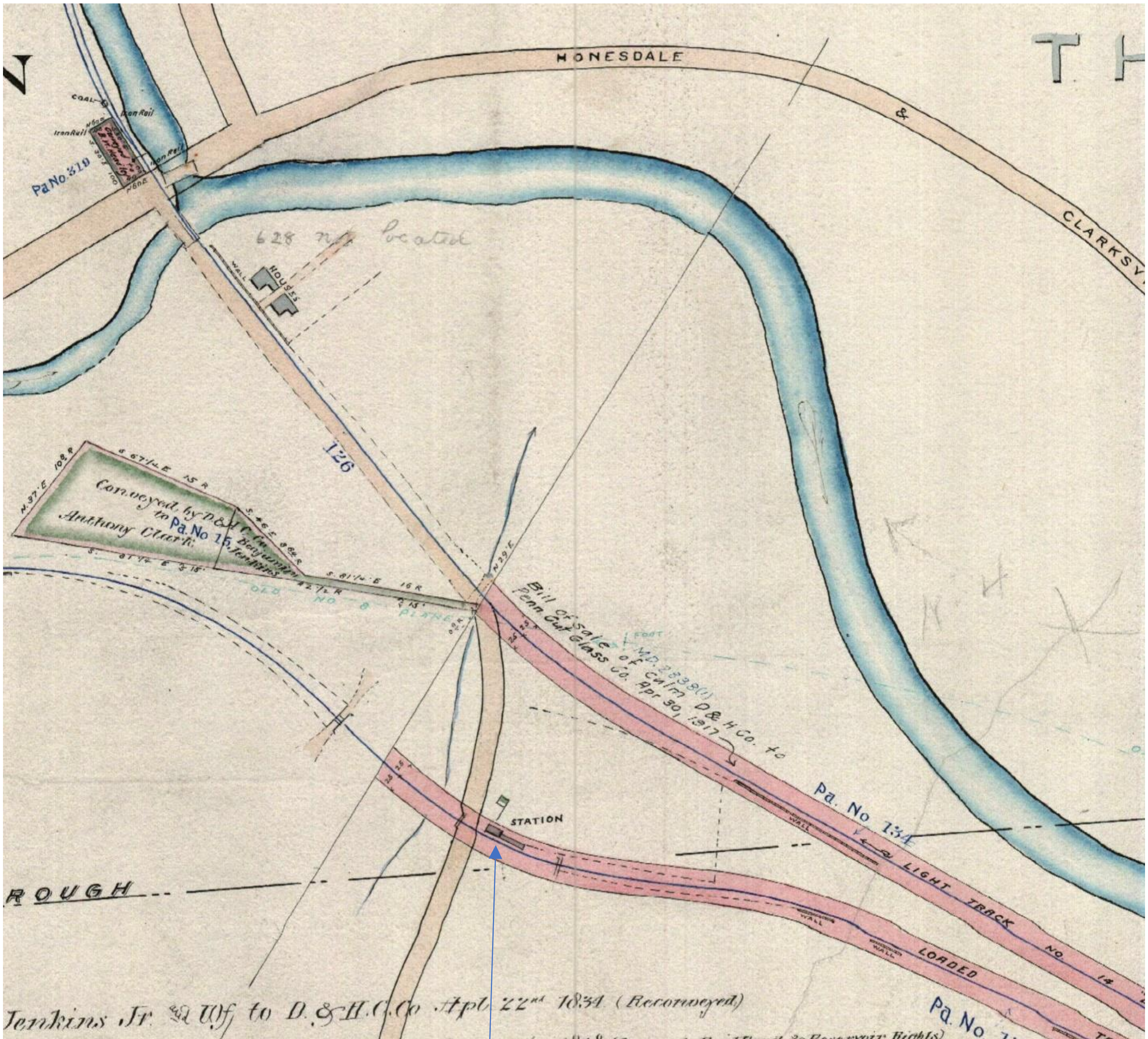
At Prompton, a trestle carried both the loaded track (between Waymart and Honesdale) and the light track on Plane No. 14 across the gully west of Prompton, the loaded track on the south side of the trestle and the light track on the north side of the trestle at the beginning of the trestle in the Prompton area. When the trestle/tracks drew near the Plane No. 14 site, the light track crossed, via **Farnum's Latches**, to south side of the trestle. This crossing of the tracks on the trestle was necessary to make possible access and egress of the cars on both tracks onto and off the Plane No. 14 site.

At the east end of the trestle, on the Plane No. 14 site, Level 14, descending to the West, connected with the light track to the foot of Plane No. 15 at Prompton. At the east end of the trestle, the loaded track continued straight ahead onto the Plane No. 14 site (this is the track on the lower level on the Plane 14 site at the present time), with the loaded coal cars, moving downgrade across the Plane No. 14 site. At the western end of the Plane 14 site, the loaded cars then passed under Plane 14 on the light track, and continued moving east on a trestle that crossed Bear Swamp Road and connected with the roadbed to Honesdale for the loaded track above the Lackawaxen River, between Bear Swamp Road and Honesdale.

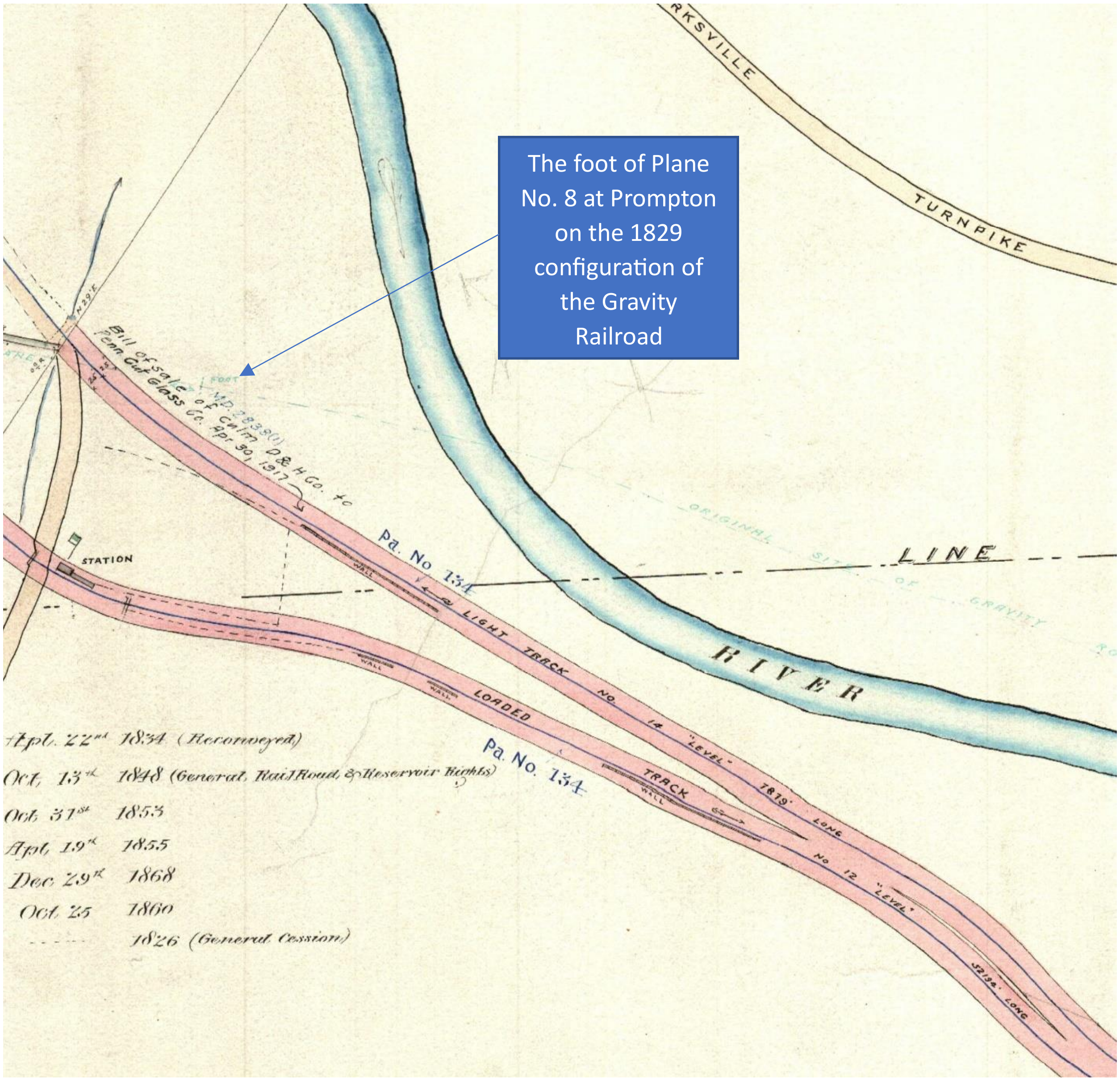
Farnum’s Latches were not used to place loaded coal cars on the light track. There was no connection of the two tracks (loaded and light) anywhere in the system, even though the two tracks could and did cross each other (at Farnum's Latches, and at Gill's Latches). Coal (in coal cars) for the stationary steam engine at the head of Plane 14 had to be delivered there via the light track from Honesdale.

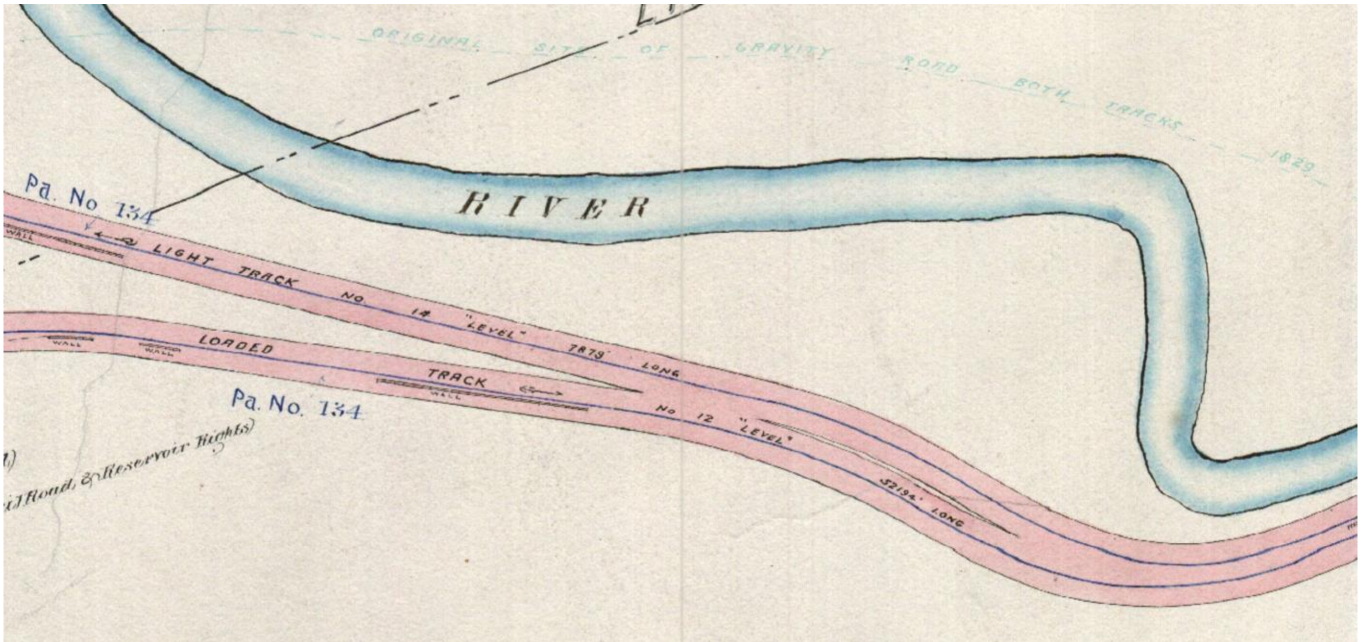
Given below is a series of map views and photographs of the D&H Gravity Railroad between Prompton and the loaded and light tracks (a short distance east of Bear Swamp Road) on the embankment above the Lackawaxen River.


PROMPTON
CHAPMAN
JAMES
LACKAWAXEN
VAN AUKEN BROOK
Pa. No. 126, 309
Pa No. 75
Pa.No.319
Pa.No 15
126
STATION
FREIGHT
WALL
HOUSES
HONES
ORIGINAL LOCATION OF PLANE NOS 1843-1857
NO 15 PLANE
OLD WATER WHEEL
Leased to Jackson Dailey
CANCELLED
Price 1901 400
1½ story + wing
SOLD
628 not located
Conveyed by D&H Co. to Anthony Clark
Bill of Sale
917

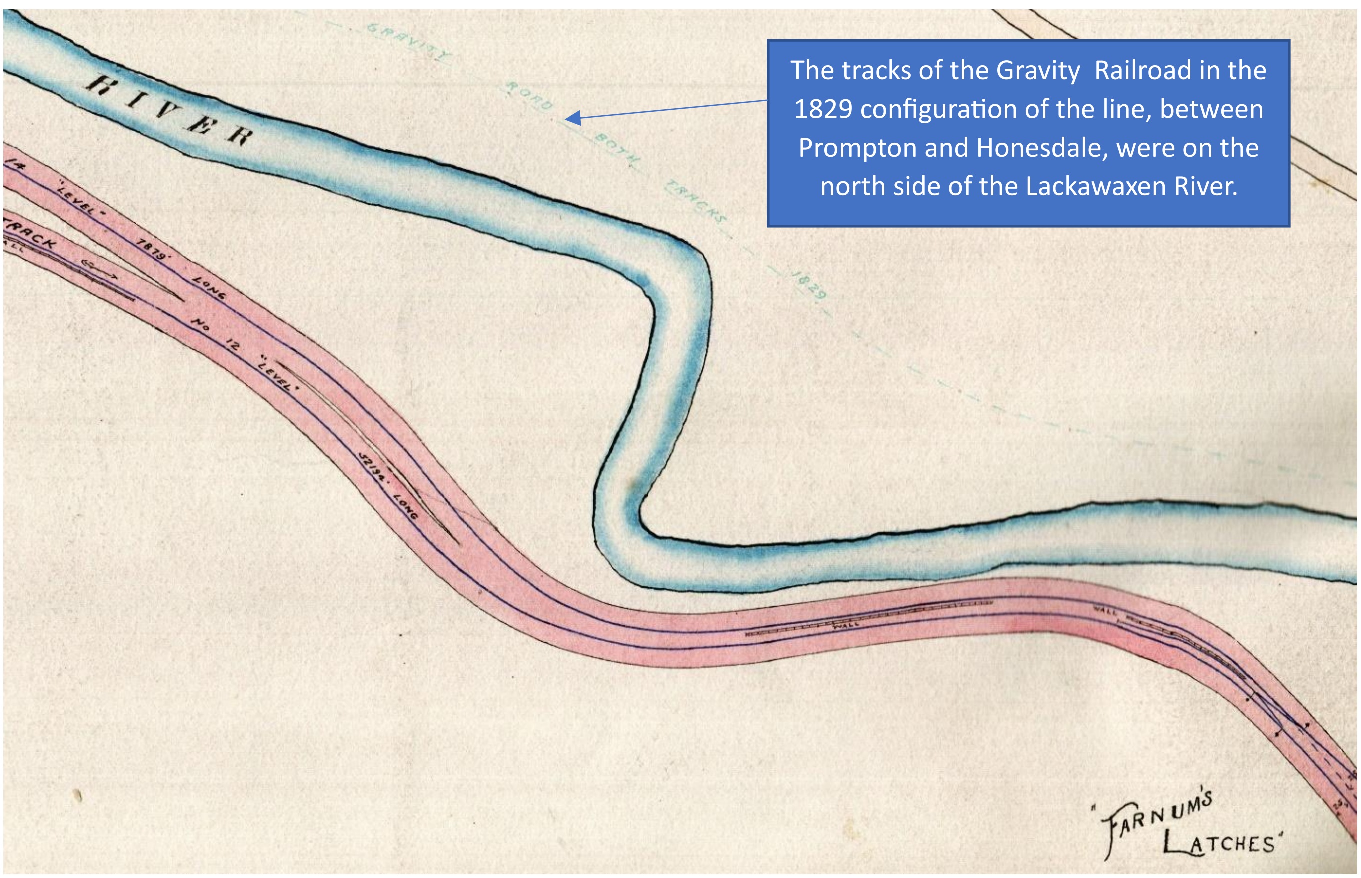


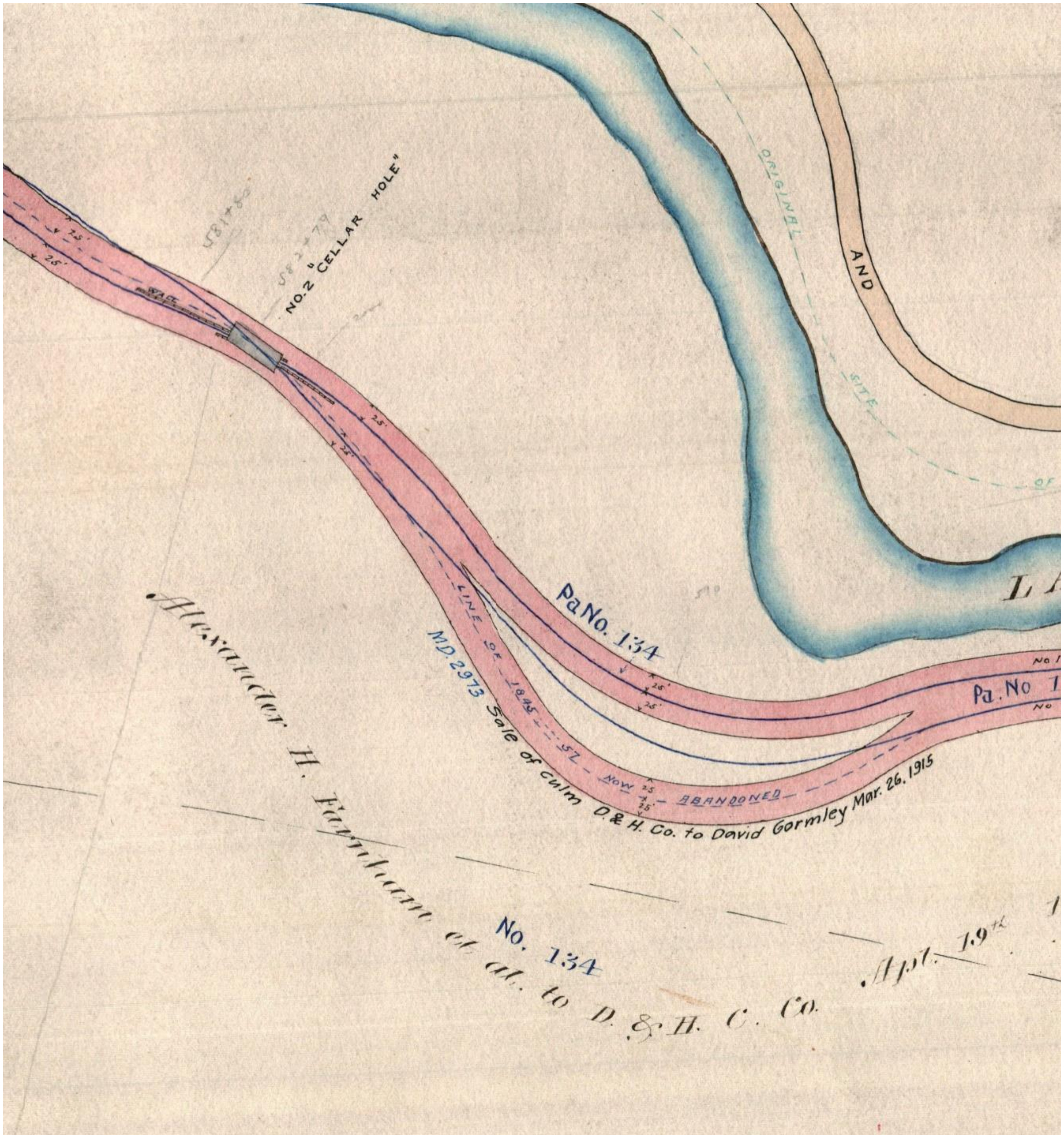
Fortenia passenger and freight station


The foot of Plane No. 8 at Prompton on the 1829 configuration of the Gravity Railroad
TURNPIKE
RIVER
LINE
STATION
Bill of Sale of claim D&H Co. to Penn Cut Glass Co. Apr. 30, 1917
Pa. No 134
LIGHT TRACK No 14 "LEVEL"
LOADED TRACK No 12 "LEVEL"
Pa. No. 134
Apl. 22nd 1834 (Reconveyed)
Oct. 13th 1848 (General, RailRoad, & Reservoir Rights)
Oct. 31st 1853
Apl. 19th 1855
Dec 29th 1868
Oct. 25 1860
1826 (General Cession)

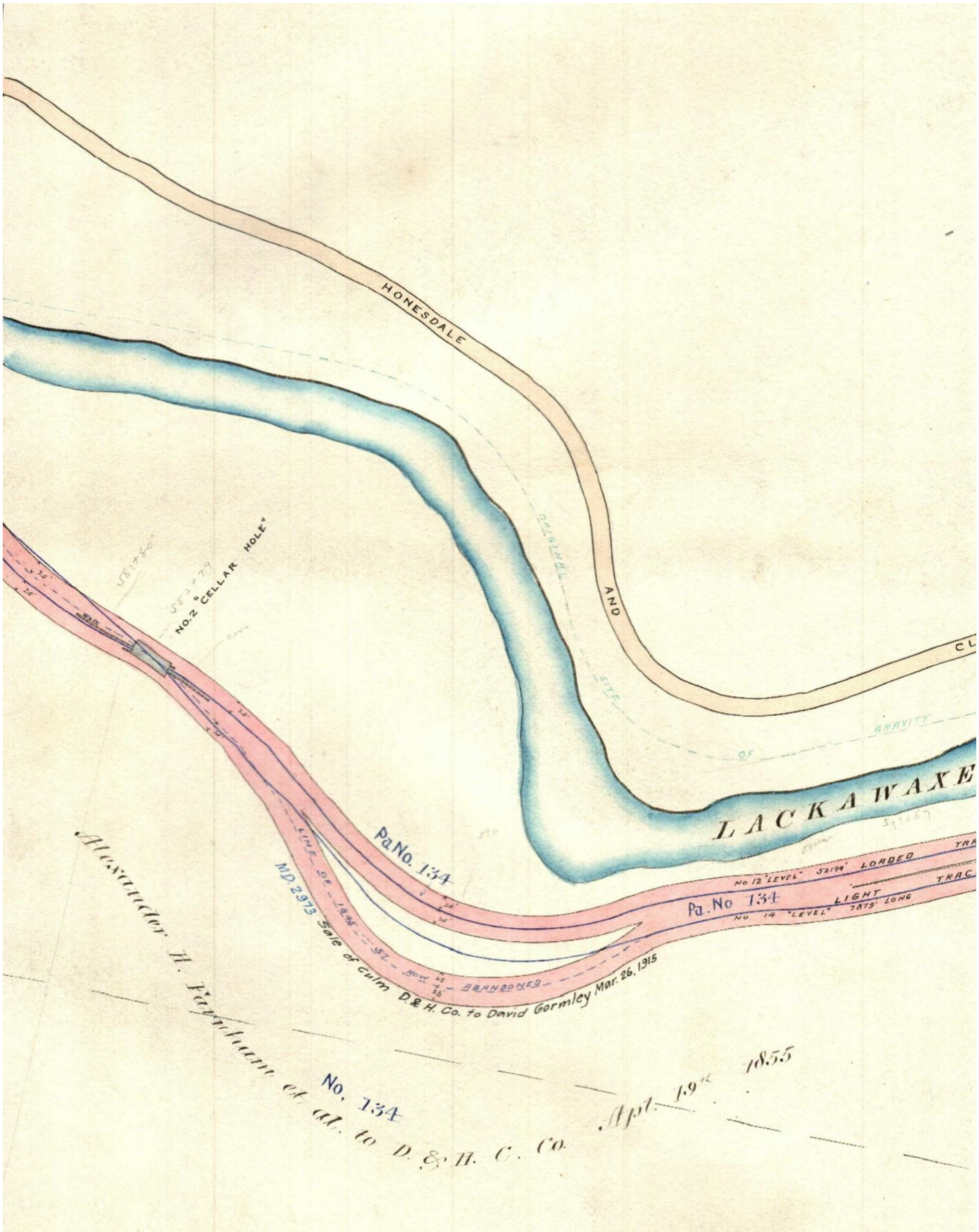


Loaded and Light cross via Farnum's Latches



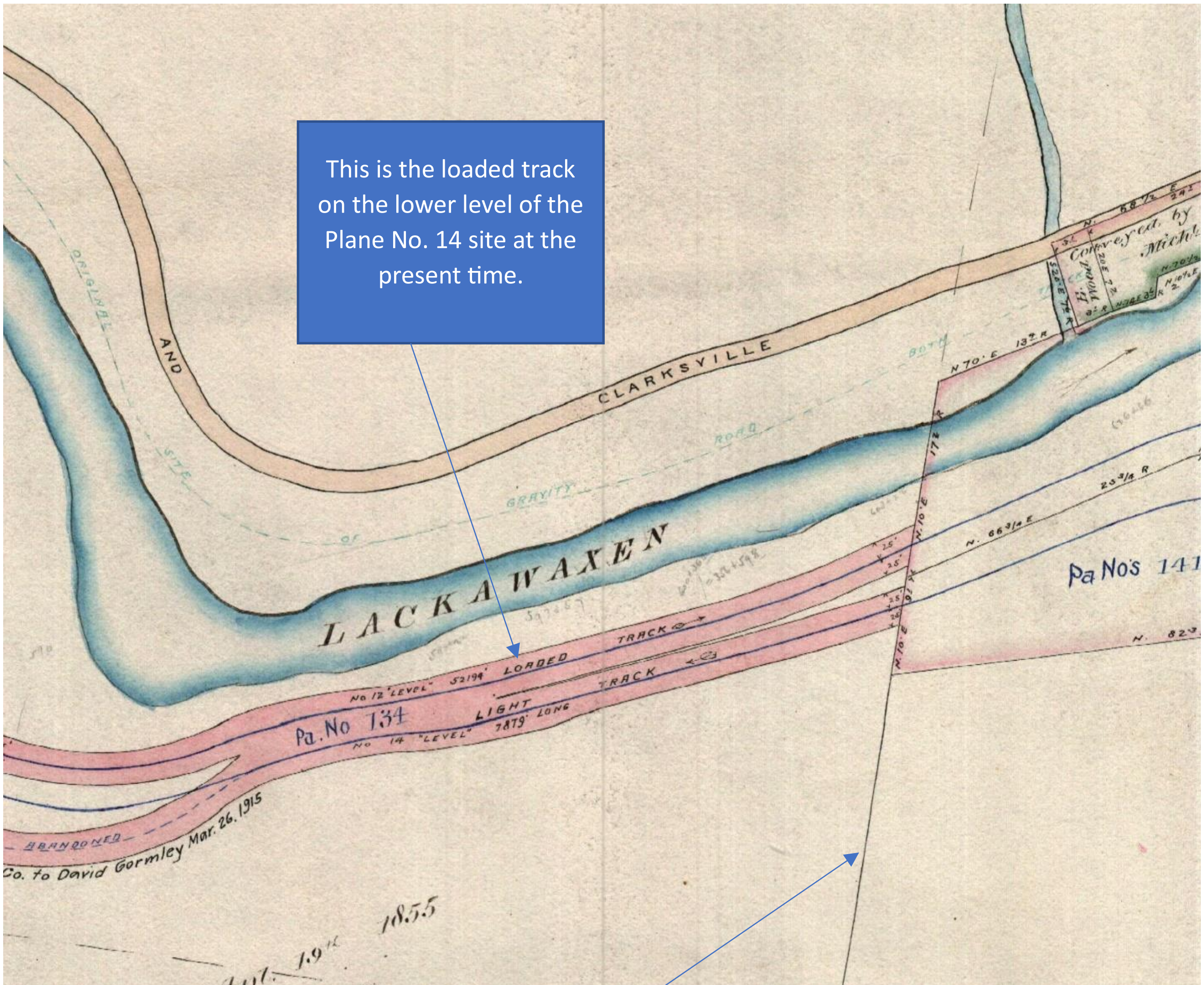


581+80
582+79
NO.2 "CELLAR HOLE"
ORIGINAL
SITE
OF
AND
LA
Pa No. 134
Pa. No 1
LINE OF 1845 - 57 NOW ABANDONED
MD 2973 Sale of culm D.& H. Co. to David Gormley Mar. 26, 1915
Alexander H. Farnham et al. to D. & H. C. Co. Apr. 19th
No. 134

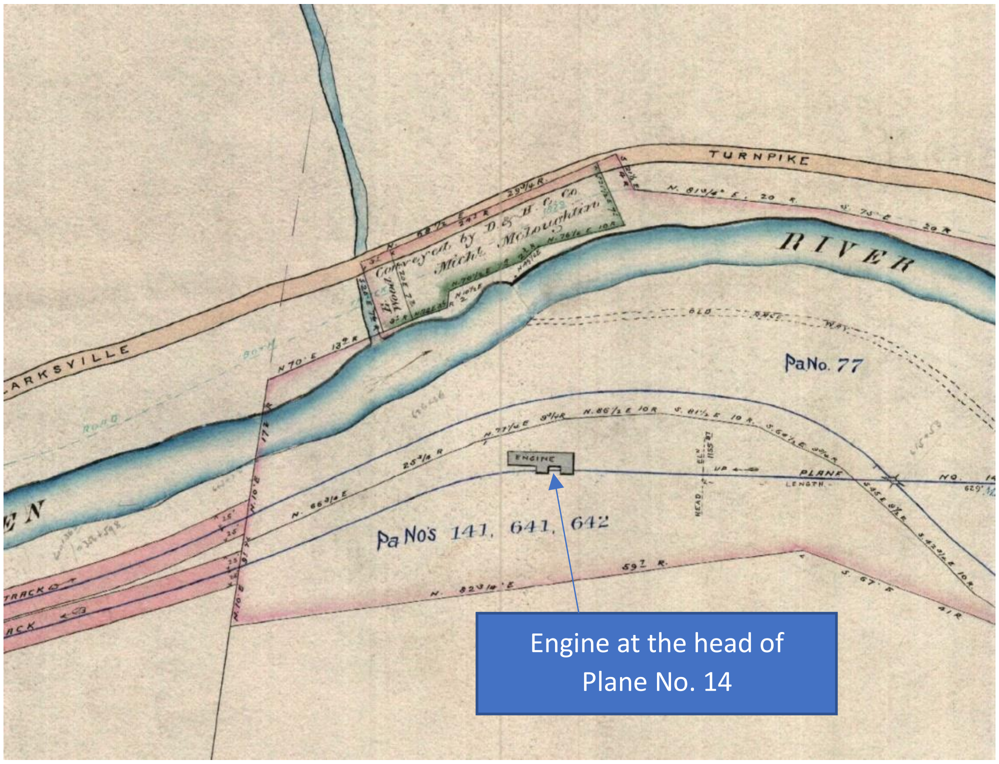


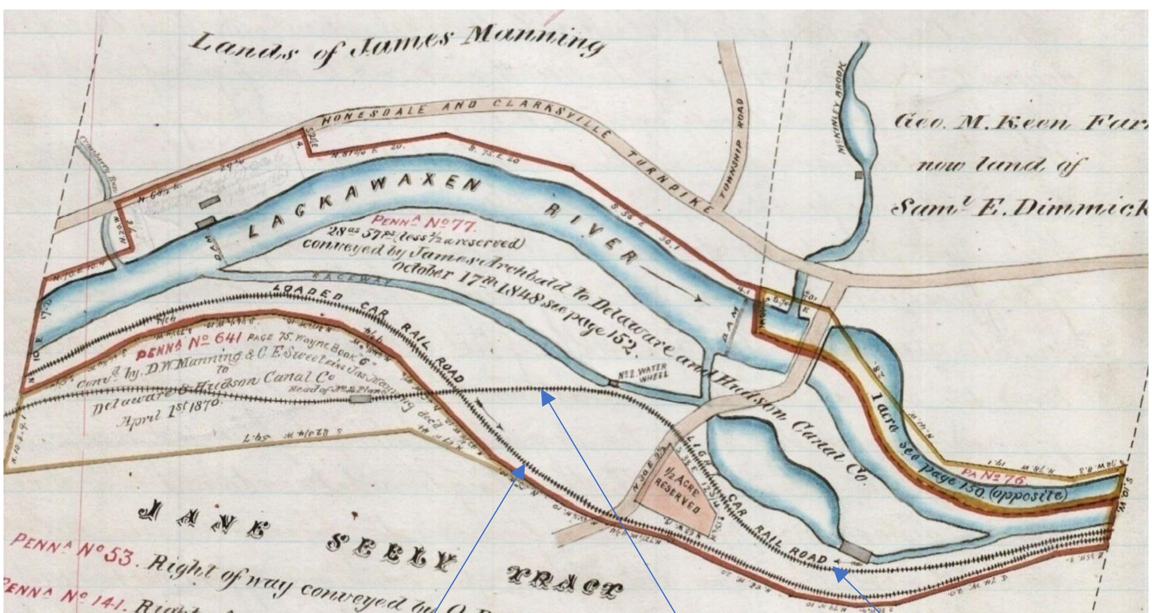
HONESDALE
AND
CL
ORIGINAL
SITE
OF
GRAVITY
LACKAWAXE
No. 2 "CELLAR HOLE"
Pa No. 134
MD. 2973 Sale of Culm D.&H. Co. to David Gormley Mar. 26, 1915
LINE OF 1855
NOW ABANDONED
No 12 "LEVEL" 5219' LOADED TRK
Pa. No 134
LIGHT TRAC
No 14 "LEVEL" 7879' LONG
No. 134
to D.&H. C. Co. Apr. 19th 1855

This is the loaded track on the lower level of the Plane No. 14 site at the present time.



This is the west property line of the land owned by Scott and Paula Bennett in the Plane No. 4 area.





Loaded track: part of the 10 mile level between Waymart and Honesdale.

Light track on Plane No. 14

Level 13 on the light track between Honesdale and Waymart

On April 20, 2023, Scott Bennett and S. Robert Powell walked the section of the loaded track that is east of Bear Swamp Road. Shown hereafter are nine photographs that were taken by S. R. Powell during that walk:



















Shown below are three photographs that were taken by SRP on Level No. 13 (immediately below the loaded track), looking in the direction of Bear Swamp Road:







In the course of this walk, SB and SRP spotted, on the Lackawaxen River at the bottom of the embankment, two pairs of Wood Ducks and several pairs of American Mergansers, all of which will surely nest in the woods there in the coming weeks.

At the conclusion of their walk in this historically rich area, SB spotted his neighbor, Lon Westphal, on his property (below Level No. 13 and the Loaded Track), and we had a very enjoyable visit with him. Happily, he is very committed to preserving the historically important vestiges of the D&H Gravity Railroad on his property (immediately to the East of Bear Swamp Road). Other neighbors of the Plane 14 site who endorse the goals and objectives of Scott and Paula Bennett on their Plane No. 14 site include Mike & Darci Sorrentino (the owners of the Farnum’s Latches area & track beds shared with the Bennetts), and Mary Evans, who owns the other half of the track beds across Bear Swamp Road.

Wire Rope: On the Scott and Paula Bennett property, Scott has found pieces of wire rope that were surely used on Plane/Level 14 in the nineteenth century. On April 24, 2023, SB sent to the Carbondale Historical Society the photographs and data, presented below, about those pieces of wire rope:

“As we discussed yesterday [04-23-2023], we previously recovered a sample of Roebling wire rope from the railroad scrap pile in our back yard. It took 6 carbide sawzall blades to cut through the 1.25” wire rope. I can report the recovered sample from the area of Plane No. 14 of the D&H Gravity RR is composed of 6 woven strands of 18 wires each wrapped around a woven hemp rope core.

I have attached two photos. The first shows a dissected portion of the wire rope demonstrating the hemp core, and the second shows a wire lashing applied to prevent unravelling of a severed wire rope.”





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